

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 3

JACK ANDERSON'S WASHINGTON LETTER
February 1985

Kremlin Update. In past letters, I have kept you up-to-date on the latest developments inside the Kremlin. Long before the stories broke in the newspapers, I told you that the younger Politburo leaders were churning for their turn in power...that the enfeebled Konstantin Chernenko was a "glorified chief clerk"...that he could be toppled as Soviet leader...that authority inside the Kremlin was fragmented...that an alliance of Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko and Defense Minister Dmitri Ustinov appeared to dominate the Politburo for awhile...but the 53-year-old Mikhail Gorbachev had won a confrontation with Gromyko and, therefore, that Gorbachev was now the man to watch. My information comes from secret intelligence reports, which continue to quote Kremlin sources as confiding that the Politburo is boiling with political ferment...that a generational revolution is stirring behind the scenes...that Chernenko could be forced to abdicate...and that Gorbachev could emerge as the new cock of the Kremlin.

What changes in policy would a new generation of Soviet leaders bring? I have no doubt that the intelligence reports are essentially true and that the Kremlin teapot is boiling. The speculation about Chernenko's forced retirement and Gorbachev's succession may also turn out to be correct. But I have been following intelligence reports for nearly 38 years, and I have reached this conclusion: The Politburo has always been both stable and durable. Its collective leadership has absorbed new members and resisted individual attempts to impose one man's will upon the group. I contend that the new generation won't be new at all, that it is already an integral part of the ruling body and that the younger Politburo members have already had their impact on policy.

My best judgment, therefore, is that any new leaders will follow essentially the same Kremlin policies and will be slow to change.